

The planters had on occasions in the past incurred the displeasure of the Government by destroying such menaces out of hand. The case dealt with above was within ten miles of the residence of the Devicolum Commissioner and in readily accessible country with a motor road running into the area concerned, so that the officers of the Government could easily satisfy themselves of the facts. But the situation remained the same even after ten months of their report, after a woman was killed and six months after a recommendation to proscribe the animal was addressed to Government.

The member suggested the desirability of issuing the necessary orders at an early date and of a clear procedure being laid down as to what should be done in such cases to obtain speedy redress.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Wright. When I read the title of the subject that you proposed to deal with, I did not know whether you were going to mention any particular instance. I am therefore not in a position to say anything about the particular case that you have mentioned. I will only say that I shall make enquiries to expedite the matter so that whatever can be done in the matter may be done soon.

One difficulty generally in matters like that, I may mention to you; and that is the difficulty of getting a proper description of the rogue so that the animal might be identified before it is shot. Very often, I understand—I am not personally very much acquainted with wild elephants it is not the same animal that visits a particular place in different seasons of the year. The damage you have complained of was on three different occasions and might have been due to three different elephants of three different herds. Proscription of a particular tusker in a particular locality might therefore bring about the death of a valuable animal which was not responsible for damage or loss of life or property. I was explaining that to show why there is delay in particular cases. In cases of the kind you mentioned, the difficulty is about the proper identification of the particular animal so that other animals may not be shot. I am sure you will agree with me that it is a sad thing to have an elephant shot without being sure that it is the real rogue responsible for the damage complained of. That is Government's main difficulty.

16. Wild Elephants.

MR. J. H. CANTLAY (*Central Travancore Planters' Association*) speaking about the damages caused to property by wild elephants, said that the destruction of property in the district of Vandiperiyar by such animals was a matter of great concern to them and that it was a subject which his Association had brought up to the Assembly on several previous occasions with no results. The position was considerably worse than what it was when the subject was last brought up, due to the following reasons:—

- (i) Wild elephants were very largely increasing in numbers.

(ii) They no longer retreated to the ever green forests during the drought months as was formerly the case.

(iii) Owing to the extensive opening of lands during the previous few years, the feeding grounds of wild elephants had been greatly restricted.

(iv) No capturing operations had been carried out in the Periyar valley or in the adjacent country for some years.

The planters who lived in the district of Vandiperiyar for a considerable number of years were of opinion that elephants were increasing in number and that they could be seen at any time in the grass, park, jungle and swampy lands situated in the Periyar valley.

Members of the Central Travancore Planters' Association had been held up at night by wild elephants in their cars on the roads running between Vandiperiyar and Chenkara and Vandiperiyar and Thengakal estates, and, on occasions, having been unable to pass them, had to return the way they came.

The damage to property during the previous two years had been very considerable. The Association after several years' experience and having considered the question of damage by wild elephants, was of opinion that its members were not afforded that measure of protection which they had a right to expect from the Government. Government said that in order to protect themselves the planters should clear and fell all unopened lands adjoining the estates. That was a very impracticable measure. In Ceylon, Government endeavoured to assist the villager by issuing free licenses and promptly prescribing wild elephants. Rewards were also granted for destroying such animals; and any person had the right to shoot trespassing tuskers. Those things could be done in Travancore too, where the damage done by elephants was far greater.

It was a good thing to thin out the bulls of a herd periodically and in some cases to destroy the older cows. For fear of prosecution by the Forest Department, members of the Association were not availing themselves of the right conferred on owners of private property by Section 46 of the Forest Regulation, which gave them the right to shoot elephants in protection of their property. The question should be reopened by Government and examined in all its aspects and necessary steps should be taken adequately to protect all estates from further depredations by wild elephants.

In reply to a representation by the representative of the Association in a previous session of the Assembly, Government said that the Forest Department would afford all reasonable help to the owners of private properties by conducting elephant capturing operations and that those operations, coupled with the provision in Section 46 of the Forest Regulation, would afford sufficient protection to person and property. But no capturing operations had been carried out in any lands adjoining the estates in the Periyar valley where elephants abounded, nor had any one dared to avail himself of that provision of the Regulation.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Cantlay. In regard to that part of your representation which relates to destruction of wild elephants, I have to give you the same answer as was given to Mr. Wright.

As regards the other subject, namely, capturing operations for the last year or two, no capturing operations were conducted in the forest near the area which you mentioned because of the difficulty of getting fodder for the elephants. You have been there and you must know that in the last year or two, all the bamboos and *etta* were dried up, and it was very difficult to procure fodder for elephants. I believe at this time of the year conditions are slightly better and I shall consult the Conservator of Forests as to the possibility of starting capturing operations in the areas you have mentioned in the season this year or at least next year.

I am not satisfied from the reports of my officers that the number of elephants has very largely increased in our forests. It seems to me that one reason why the elephants are more frequently encountered than before is, as you yourselves suggest in your third point, that more forest land has now been brought under cultivation so that the area over which elephants wandered has become more and more confined, with the result that you meet with elephants oftener than you would if they were spread over a larger area.

I am not saying that definitely as a scientific conclusion; but I am only suggesting it. Elephants might have increased in number. The forest authorities do not consider that the increase is at any rate, large. I may say that elephant-capturing operations will be started as soon as it is possible; and you may rest assured that it is not Government's policy to leave these estates absolutely unprotected or refuse help to owners of estates when they complain that wild animals are molesting them and destroying their property. Government are always prepared to protect the estate owners' property as much as possible and Government hope that, when operations are taken up for the capture of elephants or for otherwise protecting those estates by the Forest Department or by Government, the owners of estates will render all possible help in that direction.

17. Defects in the working of the Police Department.

MR. T. K. PADMANABHA PILLAI (*Trivandrum taluk, Group 1*) said that the administration of the Police Department, as seen from the Administration Report for 1105, appeared to be fairly satisfactory. The strength of the Police force was adequate to meet the requirements. But the total value of property lost through crime rose from Rs. 71,250 in 1104 to Rs. 92,439 in 1105. The percentage of recovery in 1105 was only 33, while in the previous year it was 52. The fall must have been due to loss of efficiency of the force. It was hoped that the Commissioner of Police would exact the maximum